NCA
VOC FOR PGM/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-6239 NOVEMBER 2, 1978
CHRIS KERN

ABC NEWS ON THE PLO

ANNCR:

AN AMERICAN TELEVISION NETWORK BROADCAST A DOCUMENTARY EARLIER THIS WEEK THAT PRESENTED ONE OF THE MOST EXTENSIVE REPORTS OF PALESTINIAN TERRORIST ACTIVITIES EVER SHOWN ON AMERICAN TELEVISION. NETWORK OFFICIALS SAY THE PROGRAM DREW COMPLAINTS FROM AMERICAN JEWISH GROUPS AND THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT. CHRIS KERN DESCRIBES THE PROGRAM THAT CAUSED THE CONTROVERSY.

VOICE:

THE ABC NEWS DOCUMENTARY, ENTITLED "TERROR IN THE PROMISED LAND," WAS A ONE-HOUR BROADCAST ON THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION AND OTHER GROUPS THAT HAVE BEEN USING TERROR TACTICS AGAINST ISRAEL. IT IS NOT THE FIRST TIME AN AMERICAN NEWS ORGANIZATION HAS PRESENTED AN EXTENSIVE REPORT ABOUT EITHER THE PALESTINIANS OR TERRORISM, BUT IT WAS ONE OF THE FEW TELEVISION PROGRAMS BROADCAST NATIONWIDE IN THIS COUNTRY TO RELY PRIMARILY IN INTERVIEWS WITH MEMBERS OF THE PLO.

THE BROADCAST OPENED WITH FILM COVERAGE OF YOUNG PALESTINIANS WHO WERE ABOUT TO GO ON A SUICIDE MISSION INSIDE ISRAEL. LATER, MEMBERS OF A PLO SUICIDE TEAM WERE INTERVIEWED ABOUT THEIR MOTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN SUCH OPERATIONS. "IT IS BETTER TO DIE IN ONE'S LAND," ONE OF THEM SAID, "THAN OUTSIDE OF IT."

THE PROGRAM EXPLICITLY COMPAREX PALESTINIAN TERRORISM TO THE ANTI-BRITISH TERRORISM ENGAGED IN BY JEWISH GROUPS DURING THE LAST DAYS OF THE BRITISH MANDATE. IT ALSO IMPLICITLY COMPARED PALESTINIAN TERRORISM WITH ISRAELI RETALIATORY RAIDS ON PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMPS. THE NARRATOR ALSO QUOTED PALESTINIAN CLAIMS THAT ISRAEL ENGAGES IN BRUTALITY AND TORTURE OF WEST BANK PALESTINIANS

WHO ARE DETAINED FOR ALLEGED TERRORIST ACTIVITIES. ISRAELI DENIALS WERE QUOTED ALONG WITH THE PALESTINIAN CHARGES.

UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL QUOTED ONE ABC NEWS CORRESPONDENT WHO WORKED ON THE PROGRAM AS SAYING THAT A REFERENCE TO ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER MENACHEM BEGIN'S BACKGROUND AS A TERRORIST WAS DELETED FROM THE BROADCAST BECAUSE OF THE COMPLAINTS THE NETWORK RECEIVED. THE PROGRAM, AS BROADCAST, DESCRIBED THE BOMBING OF JERUSALEM'S KING DAVID HOTEL IN 1947, BUT IT DID NOT IDENTIFY MR. BEGIN AS THE LEADER OF THE JEWISH TERRORIST GROUP THAT BLEW IT UP.

APPARENTLY ANTICIPATING COMPLAINTS FROM SOME AMERICAN VIEWERS, THE NARRATOR BEGAN THE SHOW BY SAYING, "WE KNOW THAT SOME OF YOU WILL BE OUTRAGED, AND MANY WILL BE DISTURBED." AND AT THE END OF THE PROGRAM, HE SAID:

"THIS BROADCAST HAS BEEN ABOUT PEOPLE WHO PRACTICE TERRORISM. WHAT THEY DO IS ABHORRENT TO ALL OF US. WHAT THEY SAY MAY BE EQUALLY UNACCEPTABLE. BUT FOR DECADES THEY HAVE CHARGED THE REST OF THE WORLD WITH REFUSING TO LISTEN TO THEM. . . . WE WOULD RATHER HEAR THEIR ARGUMENTS THAN THEIR GUNS."

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